

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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NIC-01 SCCT-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 /106 W

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P R 122010Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL CURACAO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2198

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJECT: TEACHERS STRIKE CONTINUES

REFERENCE: CURACAO 138

FOR PALAZZOLO ARA/CAR

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE TEACHERS STRIKE ON CURACAO AND ARUBA CONTINUES, TENSION HAS DIMINISHED. THREATS OF A GENERAL STRIKE HAVE EVAPORATED AND POLITICAL INFIGHTING BETWEEN THE PSD AND NVP-U PARTIES OVER THE GNA'S REACTION TO THE STRIKE HAS ABATED. ALSO, MEMBERS OF THE STRIKING BTG UNION, WHICH REPRESENTS GOVERNMENT BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS, RETURNED TO THEIR JOBS ON MARCH 7. END SUMMARY.

2. AS A RESULT OF A SUGGESTION BY MINISTER OF LABOR MC WILLIAM (NVP-U) A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TEACHERS CONFEDERATION OF CURACAO (VLC) AND ONE FROM THE GNA MET ON FRIDAY, MARCH 7, IN THE FIRST OFFICIAL DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE STRIKING TEACH-
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ERS AND THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THE STRIKE BEGAN. THOSE

DISCUSSIONS HAVE CONTINUED ALTHOUGH NO COMPROMISE HAS YET BEEN REACHED. A VOTE OF THE MEMBERSHIP AT A GENERAL MEETING OF THE VLC ON MARCH 10 REEMPHASIZED THE UNION'S DEMANDS AND REITERATED THE UNION'S INTENT TO REMAIN ON STRIKE UNTIL THOSE DEMANDS ARE MET. AS OF MARCH 11, THEIR STRIKE CONTINUES ON CURACAO AS DOES VLA'S ON ARUBA.

3. PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE VLC'S AND VLA'S POSITION ON THE CONSULTATION ISSUE, HOWEVER, HAS ERODED CONSIDERABLY OVER RECENT DAYS. A LAWSUIT, FILED BY A GROUP OF PARENTS, HAS RESULTED IN A COURT ORDER REQUIRING TEACHERS IN AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL TO RETURN TO WORK. LOCAL NEWSPAPERS HAVE VOLUNTARILY INITIATED A NEWS BLACKOUT ON DEVELOPMENTS AND STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE STRIKE.

4. OVERTURES BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER ISA, COUPLED WITH THE NEWS BLACKOUT, HAVE LED TO WHAT APPEARS TO BE A RAPPROCHMENT BETWEEN PSD'S ELHAGE AND NVP-US PRIME MINISTER EVERTSZ. ACCORDING TO GNA SOURCES, THE REMOVAL OF THE ISSUE FROM PUBLIC VIEW HAS ALLOWED BOTH SIDES TO REGAIN THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON BOTH THE STRIKE AND THE PENDING ELECTION. LOCAL OPINION IS THAT THE ISSUE HAS BEEN DEFUSED POLITICALLY AND IS NOW SUBJECT TO NORMAL MEDIATION PROCESSES.

5. THE HOTEL WORKERS UNION (HORECAF), WHICH HAD EARLIER ANNOUNCED ITS WILLINGNESS TO STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF THE VLC'S ACTION, HAS REVERSED ITS STAND AFTER A BULK OF ITS MEMBERSHIP DISAVOWED ANY INTENT TO STRIKE IN SYMPATHY. OTHER UNIONS HAVE JOINED HORECAF IN THE VIEW THAT THE TEACHERS STRIKE IS A MATTER STRICTLY BETWEEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE TEACHERS UNIONS.

6. FURTHER EVIDENCING THE REDUCTION IN TENSION WAS THE RETURN TO THEIR JOBS OF THE STRIKING MEMBERS OF THE UNION OF WORKMEN IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE (BTG) ON MARCH 7. THEIR DEMANDS FOR MODIFICATION OF THE GNA'S INDEXING PROPOSAL (5C) HAVE NOT BEEN MET, BUT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN BTG AND THE GNA HAVE BEGUN.

7. COMMENTS: IT SEAMS LIKELY THAT A COMPROMISE BETWEEN

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THE GNA AND THE STRIKING TEACHERS WILL BE REACHED SHORTLY. AS THEIR PUBLIC SUPPORT WANES AND THE THREAT OF COURT ORDERS TO RETURN TO WORK GROWS, IT APPEARS THAT THE VLC AND VLA WILL ABANDON THEIR STRIKE AND ACCEPT MINOR GNA CONCESSIONS, SUCH AS A GNA AGREEMENT TO CALL IN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TEACHERS TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS ON CERTAIN GNA PROPOSALS INVOLVING EDUCATION BUT SHORT OF THE INSTITUTIONALIZED VOICE THE VLA AND VLC ARE DEMANDING. LOFTON

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